

EPA wants more tests in Riverside homes

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RIVERSIDE, Ohio (WDTN) - Riverside residents met with the U.S. EPA and Ohio Department of Health after concerns of toxic chemicals could be polluting their homes.

It was an auditorium full of confusion and anger.

People in Riverside were asked to open their homes to allow the U.S. EPA to test for hazardous chemicals.

"I think the people here need to get together and file some type of lawsuit," said Jerry Lee Byrd, one of the many Riverside residents who attended Tuesday night's meeting at Stebbins High School.

Byrd urged his neighbors to sign up for the EPA testing, claiming his personal health issues were a testament to the problems in the area.

"I hope anybody out there living in the Riverside area will get tested for their liver," said Byrd, who said he is diagnosed with cirrhosis of the liver. The lifelong resident of Riverside said he does not drink or smoke and is unsure how his condition started.

The U.S. EPA along with the Ohio Department of Health are hoping to solve what is causing a build-up of toxic chemicals inside homes.

During the summer, the EPA discovered hazardous amounts of PCE and TCE inside several Riverside homes. The two chemicals are generally used for dry cleaning or removing grease from metal.

A spokesperson with EPA believes those chemicals were leaked into the soil, slowly seeping into homes through a process called "vapor intrusion."

While hazardous, both agencies at Tuesday night's meeting said the chemicals should not cause any health problems unless there was significant and long-term exposure.

"The priority at this point is to sample as many of the neighborhood homes as possible and stop any exposure that is happening," said Steve Renninger, On-Scene Coordinator for the EPA. "After that, we'll look into the source and ultimately attempt to clean up the groundwater."

Many residents who attended the public meeting were looking for the cause of the toxic vapors.

Since their initial sampling during the summer, the EPA asked for information from three businesses near the neighborhoods affected.

Renninger said two companies, Paul's Garage and YRC Freight, either could not confirm they were using those chemicals or said they never did. Renninger said Mullins Rubber Products, Inc. claimed they have been using TCE.

The EPA is still investigating the source of the chemicals and request assistance in removing them from the area.

"We are looking at potentially responsible parties to become involved in the removal action and we'll continue to do that," said Renninger.

For the homes affected, the EPA wants to install a mitigation system, comprised of piping and a fan, to help ventilate homes. The system will be covered by the EPA which, in turn, will cost the taxpayers.

The EPA has set up an office in Riverside at 2049 Harshman Road to help assist residents during the investigation.

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